

The Record.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1878.
COMMENCEMENT OF FIFTEENTH
VOLUME.

The Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record now enters upon its fifteenth year. In the course of the fourteen years which have elapsed since its commencement, our Church has witnessed many changes. It has lost, indeed, some of the fathers whose labors were connected with its establishment and organization. It has lost not a few of its exemplary and faithful elders, office-bearers, and members. But most of the changes which have been witnessed have been indicative of progress and increase. Large Presbyteries are now found where formerly there were none, and the roll of ministers has increased nearly sixfold. We thank God for what of His blessing we have enjoyed during these past years.

We look forward with confidence to the future. That God, who hath blessed us, will we firmly trust, bless us still,—bless our ministers and congregations,—bless our College,—bless our missionary undertakings, and pour out upon us of His Spirit, that we may grow not only in numbers, but also in spiritual strength and vigor.

We shall note from month to month the progress of the Church, and communicate general ecclesiastical and missionary intelligence, presenting to our readers news of the Churches throughout the world, more particularly of the Presbyterian Churches. As heretofore, a sermon will be occasionally published, and practical extracts, forming monthly a "Christian Treasury."

We thank those who have aided and supported us in time past, and earnestly ask a continuance of such assistance.

Subscribers are requested to pay their subscriptions as promptly and regularly as possible, and to co-operate with ministers and agents in seeking the extension of the circulation of the Record.

THE DUTY OF HUMILIATION AND THANKSGIVING.

We admire the custom which is prevalent among our neighbours on the other side of the lines, and which has all the force of law, of setting apart a day of thanksgiving at this season of the year. We should desire to see such an arrangement here. People may entertain different views as to the power of the Magistrate *in sacris* or *circa sacra*. But we do not think that we should quarrel about such an appointment. Our friends on the other side find no difficulty about the matter, nor should we here. Indeed we deeply regret that there is not to this extent a public recognition of God, of his providential dealings, and of our relations and obligations to him. We observe from the proceedings of the Presbytery of Toronto, that a committee has been appointed to bring the matter before the notice of the Executive.

We trust the application may be successful. But in case it should not be successful, the committee are authorized to correspond with other parties, and endeavour to have a day observed as generally as possible. Most certainly we have at the present time many special reasons both for humiliation and for thanksgiving. We have reason to be humbled as a community for God's visitation has not yet been withdrawn. The return of commercial prosperity has been delayed. The clouds which still cover the horizon, if not so terrific as when first they came together, are scarcely brighter than they were.

The hopes of an abundant harvest, sufficient to remove past deficiencies, have not been realized. Various natural means and instrumentalities have been called into action by the Almighty, some of them akin to means employed in former times to rebuke the pride and self-sufficiency of His professing people, and to demonstrate His own sovereign, and unlimited power. In some localities the grasshoppers have made "an end by eating the grass of the land," and the threatened judgments recorded in the sacred volume have been almost literally fulfilled; Amos. vii. 1-3; Joel. first and second chapters. It surely becomes us to do, not feignedly, but from the heart, what we are directed to do in the passage referred to, viz: "Sanctify a fast, gather the people, assemble the elders, and pray, 'spare thy people O Lord and give not thine heritage to reproach, wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God?' If we thus humble ourselves before the Lord whom we have grieved, we have the most ample ground to hope and trust that God's recorded promises shall be all fulfilled.—that He "will restore the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar and the palmerworm," and make us to know that He is in the midst of us, that He is "the Lord our God and none else."

We have, it is true, mercies to acknowledge, as well as sins to confess and judgements to deprecate. God hath not chastened us as we deserved. We have many public blessings, and many domestic and personal comforts and privileges. It becometh us gratefully to acknowledge these, to use them for the glory of Him who hath bestowed them, and to manifest our gratitude by growing obedience to His laws, and regard for His authority.

We trust a day for humiliation and thanksgiving, will be appointed for general observance. Should this not be done, we hope every congregation will have an opportunity of engaging in such exercises.

SABBATH DESECRATION.

A Sermon by Rev. John Gray, Orillia.
Ezekiel, xxiii. 38.—"Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbath."

Ezekiel, the prophet of the captivity, was sent by God partly to warn, and partly to comfort the Israelites, while captives in the land of Chaldea. To accomplish the former

object, he minutely and frequently unfolds their sins. Among these sabbath desecration stands conspicuous. It is oftener mentioned than any other of their national crimes, and is placed in such close connection with their foul idolatries and immoralities, as to shew its ungodly character in His eyes, and the great indignation which He felt against it. Just as the commandment occupies a central and conspicuous place, in the decalogue, so does its transgression stand forth with peculiar prominence as the monster sin, on account of which the Lord had sent his people Israel, as captive strangers, into a foreign land. And, think ye my dear friends, that we are in this respect guiltless,—or that in God's reckoning with us as a province, no charge of Sabbath profanation can be proved against us?

The railway whistle, as in proud defiance of God it utters its unearthly shriek, and disturbs so many of our Town and City Congregations—our open Post Offices, with their numerous letters and newspapers,—our half-closed Hotels and Taverns,—our Canals filled with Vessels and our Lakes traversed with Steamers,—all afford palpable and melancholy proofs, that we are a Sabbath-desecrating, pleasure-loving people, ripe for the judgments of God. He who ages ago said of His chosen people, "Moreover this they have done unto me," may address a similar indignant rebuke to us, "They have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my Sabbaths." In view of these sad facts, many friends of the Lord's day, have ligued themselves together, for the purpose of promoting Sabbath observance, and they have requested each minister of the gospel, to bring the subject before his people, on an appointed Sabbath. In accordance with a request so reasonable, we purpose in the strength of Jehovah, to direct your attention to the subject of prevalent Sabbath sins. May the Lord guide both speaker and hearers in this matter.

Were the sun, my dear hearers, only to return, after an interval of seven days, leaving our earth meanwhile in Egyptian darkness, how gladly would all men hail his appearance. They would anxiously watch his return, bask in his revivifying rays, and greatly enjoy his weekly appearance. And should the weekly advent of that sun of days be less welcome, by which God lets fall upon our earth the rays of heaven's glory, and affords us glimpses of eternal bliss? Should we not receive with grateful gladness a day so fraught with mercies to the souls of men, and dropping so richly the sweet smelling myrrh of divine love upon unworthy rebels. Some one has called the Bible the God of books, and with as much truth may the Sabbath be called the God of days. In the language of the gentle Grahame, we may sing "Hail, Sabbath! thee I hail, the poor man's day."

"Bless'd day of God, how calm, how bright.
A day of joy and praise;
The laborer's rest, the saint's delight,
The first and best of days."

Now we might reasonably suppose, that a day so blessed and bountiful would be hailed with joy by every son of man. But alas! this is far from being the case—no divine precept is more frequently or more heedlessly broken.

In pursuance of our plan, we would therefore direct your attention first of all to our Provincial sins. By Provincial we mean those acts of Sabbath desecration, which are authorized by law, or permitted and practised by the people generally.

By law, for example, our Post Offices are open for a certain portion of each Lord's day—Canada now contains about 1500 of these, and the Sabbath rights and domestic comforts of upwards of 1000 families are thus seriously in-